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Committees:
Criminal Justice & Corrections
(Vice chair)
Transportation (Vice Chair)
Judiciary



2002

REPORT TO THE 44TH DISTRICT

Dear Neighbor,

With the economy slumping, our transportation system in crisis and our state budget facing a major shortfall, we were faced with many tough challenges this legislative session. I am pleased to say that we met these challenges by responding thoughtfully and creatively to our state's needs.

Some of our accomplishments this session include:

- Passage of both a statewide and regional transportation plan that lets voters decide how they want to address our state's traffic congestion
- Approval of a budget that maintains our strong commitment to education and protects services to the poor, the elderly and the disabled.
- Enhanced public safety by improving our state's ability to prevent acts of terrorism.
- Reforms to our criminal justice system that toughen penalties for car thieves and reduce crime among drug offenders.

And I am pleased to say that we accomplished all of this without raising taxes!

In this newsletter, I'll report further about these bills and other measures that we passed in Olympia. Thank you for the opportunity to serve during the 2002 Legislative Session and always feel free to contact me with your comments about the many important issues affecting our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Lovick".

Rep. John Lovick

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Transportation plans sent to a public vote
- Filling the budget hole
- Enhancing public safety
- Protecting local parks

TRANSPORTATION PLANS SENT TO A PUBLIC VOTE



This session we passed a 10-year transportation plan that invests \$6.1 billion for congestion relief and road safety on state highways, \$1.2 billion for transportation choices including buses, rail, and passenger-only ferries, and an additional \$330 million for local transportation projects in cities, suburbs and rural communities. The plan goes to the ballot in November, giving voters the final say about how we address traffic gridlock.

Some of the projects in our area that would be funded by the plan include:

- Additional lanes on I-405 from Lynnwood to Tukwila
- HOV lanes on I-5 from Everett to the Port of Tacoma
- Safety improvements on the State Route 522, the “Highway of Death”
- Funding for a new State Route 520 bridge
- Significant improvements on State Route 9
- A new roadway in Mill Creek on State Route 96
- Additional lanes on State Route 527 in the Silver Lake area

We also approved a regional transportation plan that focuses on the needs of Snohomish, King, and Pierce Counties. This plan, which will also go to a public vote, authorizes county council members from the three counties to draw up a plan to address traffic gridlock and present the citizens of the three counties with a revenue proposal to pay for road projects.

I sponsored two other measures that we approved to help reduce our traffic problems include:

- The “steer it and clear it” plan to get cars involved in non-injury accidents off the road as quickly as possible. With 60% of congestion caused by stalled cars and traffic accidents, this measure will significantly reduce transportation gridlock.
- A measure to make it easier for transit authorities to approve vanpool drivers. This will reduce congestion by getting more people into vanpools and more cars off of the road.

Finally, we approved an important set of transportation reforms to make transportation planning at the state and local level more efficient and accountable. The efficiencies bill we passed sets measurable performance benchmarks on transportation projects, increases contracting out with the private sector by DOT, and prioritizes the most urgent transportation projects according to safety and traffic volume.



A BUDGET FIX WITHOUT RAISING TAXES

The economic slowdown of the past year, dramatically worsened by the September 11th attacks, put us in a \$1.5 billion budget hole this session. To respond to these tough budget circumstances, we made steep cuts in state services totaling \$684 million, drew from the state’s rainy-day reserve fund, sold off a small portion of our tobacco settlement money and cut a handful of outdated tax exemptions for businesses. As we did this, though, we were extremely careful to maintain our commitment to public education and the safety net that protects the poor, elderly and the disabled.

As families must do, we tightened our belt during these tough economic times, and refused to raise taxes. And despite sharply rising expenditures for health care, education, prison costs and other state services, we stayed \$431 million below the Initiative 601-imposed spending limit.

The good news is that the economy appears to be improving. Hopefully, our state’s economy will rebound quickly from the recession and state revenues will enable us to continue to make critical investments in public education and health care. Regardless, though, we will continue to look for areas of inefficiency in state government and make cuts when necessary.

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ENHANCING PUBLIC SAFETY

SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES

According to the head of the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission, the most important traffic law we passed this year was not the statewide plan nor even the regional proposal, but a measure that will increase the use of seat belts. Currently, 82 percent of Washington motorists and passengers use seat belts. The remaining 18 percent are at risk of serious injury or death due to a traffic accident. In fact, over 60 percent of Washington's traffic deaths occur because drivers or passengers are not wearing seat belts.

House Bill 1460 would allow officers to pull over vehicles for the sole reason of an unbuckled passenger or driver. As the sponsor of this measure and a law enforcement officer, I initially had some reservations about this legislation, fearing that it could be misused by officers. However, evidence in other states shows that motorists respond to these laws by buckling up because officers use the new capability to inform drivers about the importance of wearing seat belts. I am proud to have sponsored a measure that traffic safety experts estimate will save more than 100 lives in the next year and millions of dollars in medical expenses.

SAFER SCHOOLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Another important effort that moved forward this session involved our work to respond quickly to emergencies in our schools. Resulting from a bill I sponsored during the 2001 legislative session, police officers,

firefighters and other emergency service workers will now be better prepared to respond to emergencies by using technology that provides nearly instantaneous information about the location of incidents. The technology will soon be available to emergency service professionals to enhance school safety throughout the state.

TOUGHENING PENALTIES FOR CAR THIEVES

A recent rash of car theft cases in which the offenders fled from police, leading to the deaths or serious injuries of several people, has brought much attention to the problem of car theft. These violent episodes coupled with an alarming rise in car thefts over the past decade highlighted the need to toughen our laws around this issue. In Everett alone, the number of car thefts has

tripled in the past decade. In the same period, car thefts increased by almost 60 percent in Seattle and doubled in Bellevue.

In Olympia, we responded by passing a measure that toughens penalties against car thieves, teaching them the important lesson that this crime will not be treated lightly. The measure stiffens penalties for those who take cars apart to sell their parts and those who go "joyriding." We will continue to monitor the disturbing trend of rising car thefts and work to pass legislation that will protect the property of the citizens of our state.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION AND CRIME

As a law enforcement officer, I know well the harm drug addiction can cause to an individual, a family and a

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In the photo above, Rep. Lovick meets with a group of students who spent a day serving as shadow legislators. The students attended committee meetings, watched floor proceedings and learned about many facets of the legislative process.

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community. To respond to the growing numbers of offenders wasting away in our jails and prisons, we passed a plan this session to hold offenders accountable for their addiction. The drug sentencing reform plan approved by the Legislature will expand drug courts in Snohomish County and extend these programs to all other counties in the state.

It is both tough and smart on crime, saving taxpayers money and giving addicts a chance to turn their lives around. One year of drug court services typically costs \$2,500 per participant— while incarceration averages \$25,000 per year. For the cost of 65 days in jail, you can provide as much as 18 months of treatment to an addict. Most importantly, drug courts have been extremely successful in reducing crime rates among drug offenders in 11 counties in our state. In Snohomish County, only 1 out of 39 drug court graduates has re-offended since completing the program.

PROTECTING LOCAL PARKS

LOCAL DECISION - MAKING ABOUT LOCAL PARKS

I sponsored another important measure that we passed this session which allows smaller towns and cities to form park districts. Currently, many communities across the state are unable to build or maintain the facilities they have due to budgetary constraints and reductions brought on by the recession. Moreover, many parks and recreation directors complain about having to wait until a citizen complains before they can act to fix anything. The measure we approved, House Bill 2557, unties the hands of local authorities and gives them more power to better fund these services.

Under the new law, counties and cities will be able to work in tandem or on their own to form a metropolitan park district. This separate entity could then draft a ballot proposal to raise revenue for park maintenance or new park acquisition. With this independent funding source, parks and recreation departments would be less vulnerable to the budget woes of other departments.

NEW BASEBALL, SOCCER FIELDS IN MILL CREEK

I am also pleased to announce that we approved a construction budget that provides funding for new active-use sports fields, the first such fields ever constructed in the city of Mill Creek. In a recent survey, residents of Mill Creek identified active use sports fields as the most needed public facilities in the city. The plan we passed in the Legislature addresses this need, investing \$1 million in the construction of fields for baseball, soccer and other popular sports.



Printed on recycled paper

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